

She Helps Feed Thousands of Strays

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Mimi Ausland, 12

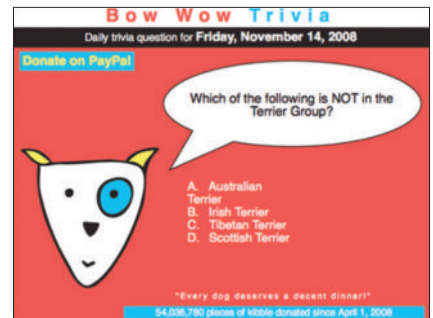
Bend, Ore.

When Mimi Ausland was just 2 her parents called her Dr. Doolittle after the toddler helped injured birds near her home. By age 9 Mimi was volunteering at a shelter, cleaning up after pooches and felines. “She has this huge heart,” says her dad, Kelly, 47, “and is so protective of animals.”

This year Mimi took her commitment to her four-legged friends to a new level. After learning that many shelters face food shortages, Mimi—with help from her parents—created the Web sites freekibble.com and freekibblekat.com. This eventually prompted a Portland, Ore., company to donate 10 pieces of dry food to a shelter for every answered question thought up by Mimi. Since April she has provided a half million meals to homeless animals, becoming the sole supplier to 11 shelters nationwide.

The donations are a godsend for cash-strapped shelters. A day after tropical storm Fay swept through Florida destroying food supplies at an animal refuge in Clewiston, Mimi offered 2,000 lbs. of dry food. “All I could do was cry,” says director Palena Dorsey. “What Mimi is doing goes beyond the food.”

By Diane Herbst



Mimi with homeless dogs from a local shelter. Above, a daily trivia question from freekibble.com.



Please tune in to **CNN HEROES: An All-Star Tribute** featuring the best of PEOPLE's 2008 Heroes Among Us, hosted by CNN's Anderson Cooper on Thanksgiving, Thursday, Nov. 27, at 9 p.m. on CNN.